



Bringing Resources to Nevada's Adult Education Community

Volume 10 Number 2

August 2004

SPECIAL ISSUE: Reading research guides practice

Editor's note: According to researcher Dr. Larry Mikulecky (2003), there are three major trends in adult literacy: distance education, linking adult literacy instruction to K-12 performance standards, and increased accountability and the linking of funding to scientifically (and evidence) based research. This issue focuses on a key concern in adult education: How can we best teach adults to read?

The K-12 connection

A National Reading Panel of literacy experts examined thousands of K-12 studies to determine those that met the criteria for "scientific" research. Their report, issued in 2000, identified five key areas of instruction crucial to children's success in learning to read. The No Child Left Behind Act (2002) emphasizes the Panel's findings in a myriad of ways.

The Adult Education and Family Literacy Act (1998) and the blueprint for its reauthorization (the Adult Basic and Literacy Education Act of 2003) also stress the importance of building practices on a strong foundation of scientifically based research findings.

Adult arena seeing action

Research focused on adults is scarce, and experts are striving to fill the void:

- 📖 The Reading Research Working Group, a panel of experts on reading research and practice, analyzed the existing adult basic education reading instruction research base. (See page 2 for some findings.) The group's 128-page report, *Research-based Principles for Adult Basic Education Reading Instruction*, was published by the Partnership for Reading in September 2002 and is available at www.nifl.gov/partnershipforreading/.
- 📖 The Office of Vocational Education (OVAE) - Division of Adult Education and Literacy is preparing to pilot STAR, the STudent Achievement in Reading program. STAR will translate the research-based principles identified by the Partnership for Reading into useable classroom practices and work to infuse those practices into classrooms and instructional settings.
- 📖 The National Institute for Literacy (NIFL), National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD), and the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Vocational and Adult Education (OVAE) have funded six research studies to be conducted 2002-2006. The topics are:
 - Research on reading instruction for low-literate adults
 - Testing the impact of health literacy in adult literacy and integrated family approach programs
 - Improving literacy instruction for adults
 - Relative effectiveness of reading programs for adults
 - Young adult literacy problems: prevalence and treatment
 - Building a knowledge base for teaching adult decoding

5 Key areas of literacy instruction

- **Phonemic awareness**
- **Phonics**
- **Fluency**
- **Vocabulary**
- **Comprehension**

Editor: Sharyn Yanoshak ■ Phone: 702/253-6280 ■ Fax: 702/651-4531 ■ E-mail: saylv@cox.net
Community College of Southern NV, 3200 E. Cheyenne Ave. - K1B, North Las Vegas NV 89030
Back issues archived at: www.literacynet.org/nvadulted/newsletters.html

Research-based findings for ABE reading instruction

The Reading Research Working Group identified 18 **principles**, the strongest statements made about ABE reading instruction. Principles are based on findings from two or more experimental studies and any number of non-experimental studies.

1. When measures of achievement are obtained for each crucial aspect of reading instruction (alphabeticity, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension), instructionally relevant patterns of scores, or profiles of adults' strengths and needs in reading, may be observed. These profiles suggest that ABE readers, including those in ESOL programs and those with a reading disability, are very diverse and that any one measure of reading achievement may not be sufficient to identify strengths and needs for instruction.
2. Adult non-readers have virtually no phonemic awareness ability and are unable to consistently perform, on their own, almost all phonemic awareness tasks.
3. Adult beginning readers, like all beginning readers, including children, perform poorly on phonemic awareness tasks that require phoneme manipulation. The ability to perform more complex operations with phonemes generally increases (in adults without a reading disability) along with reading ability, until word analysis is established.
4. Adult beginning readers, like other beginning readers, have difficulty applying letter-sound knowledge in order to figure out new or unfamiliar words while reading, although they are generally better at recognizing familiar sight words than children who are learning to read.
5. Participation in ABE programs may lead to increases in adult beginning readers' word analysis abilities.
6. Phonemic awareness and/or word analysis instruction may lead to increased achievement in other aspects of reading for adult beginning readers.
7. Word analysis may be taught using approaches that include direct instruction in word analysis along with instruction in other aspects of reading.
8. Fluency is an issue for adult beginning readers, intermediate readers, and perhaps for those reading at more advanced ABE levels. There are very large differences between adults with good and poor reading fluency, and adult beginning readers' fluency is similar to the fluency of children who are beginning readers.
9. Fluency may be taught to ABE students and fluency practice may lead to increases in reading achievement.
10. Fluency may be taught using approaches that include the repeated reading of passages of text, words from texts, and other text units.
11. Adults who qualify for ABE have poor functional literacy comprehension achievement. Although they may be able to perform simple comprehension tasks such as recalling ideas from simple stories and locating a single piece of information in a simple text, they are often unable to combine (integrate and synthesize) information from longer or more complex texts.
12. ESL adults, on average, tend to have lower functional literacy comprehension achievement in English; the percentage of ESL adults among the ABE target population is greater than the percentage among the general adult population.

Other findings

The group also identified:

- 32 **trends**, which are based on findings from a single experimental study,
- 22 **ideas**, based on a thorough review of reading instruction research at the K-12 level that help to fill the gap in the ABE reading instruction research base, and
- 10 **comments**, which are weaker, less conclusive findings from the K-12 research.

These findings can be accessed at www.nifl.gov/partnershipforreading/ (click on adult education along the right, then on the document *Research-based Principles for Adult Basic Education Reading Instruction*).

13. Adults with a learning disability tend, on average, to have lower functional literacy comprehension achievement and are over-represented within the ABE target population.
14. Participation in an adult literacy program may lead to an increase in reading comprehension achievement.
15. Providing explicit instruction in reading comprehension strategies may lead to increased reading comprehension achievement.
16. Combining comprehension instruction with instruction in various other components of reading may lead to increased reading comprehension achievement.
17. In general, computer-assisted instruction (CAI) is at least as effective as non-CAI in increasing reading comprehension achievement.
18. The use of CAI may lead to increased reading comprehension achievement.

ARCS Research to Practice

Editor's note: The National Center for the Study of Adult Learning and Literacy's Adult Reading Components Study (ARCS) was designed to describe the various types or clusters of readers enrolled in U.S. ABE programs, including both native speakers and those in ESOL classes. The goal of the study was to help practitioners and policymakers understand

who adult learners are as readers and how to gear instruction to their specific reading needs.

The National Institute for Literacy supports an interactive Web site that builds on the ARCS work. Linda Schneider-Erger (lschneider@tmcc.edu), ABE Literacy Coordinator at TMCC, kindly analyzed the site and provided this review.

Based on a study of 569 ABE learners, the ARCS Web site (<http://www.nifl.gov/readingprofiles/>) is an informative resource for teachers and tutors. There are two tracks that you can follow:

Match a profile

In the interactive "Match a Profile" section, the teacher plugs in a student's grade-equivalent scores for word recognition, spelling, word meaning, and silent reading, along with the student's oral reading rate. A profiler analyzes the scores, matches them to one of the eleven ARCS-based profiles, and then provides additional profile information along with suggestions for instruction. This section covers reading levels from zero to twelfth grade. If a grade-equivalent score is not available, the site offers a test bank that helps locate an assessment suitable for the adult learner.

Take the mini-course

The mini-course track provides detailed information about the various components of reading including: phonemics, word recognition, spelling, rate and fluency, word meaning, background knowledge, and silent reading comprehension. A click on "Word Recognition" provides two sub-categories to choose from: "Sight Words" and "Word Analysis." The word analysis section begins with a clear definition and then moves from letter sounds to syllable patterns, structural analysis, compound words, affixes, and finally to syllabication.

Other areas covered in the mini-course include assessment and its link to instruction, learner questionnaires, information on the ARCS, and references and resources. The sample "Learner Questionnaire" would be a valuable tool to use during any in-take interview. A number of downloadable resources are also available from this easily navigable site.

Nevada produces resource

Research to Practice: Scientifically Based Reading Research to Evidence Based Reading Instruction, Nevada Literacy Coalition, 2002. Includes articles about scientifically based reading research and strategies for implementing evidence-based reading instruction for the five key areas (phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension). Free. Contact: 800/445-9673 or 775/684-3340, sfgraf@clan.lib.nv.us

UCCSN BOARD OF REGENTS

Chair: Dr. Stavros Anthony
Vice Chair: Marcia Bandera
Regents: Mark Alden,
Dr. Jill Derby,
Thalia Dondoro,
Douglas Roman Hill,
Linda Howard,
Dr. Thomas Kirkpatrick,
Howard Rosenberg,
Douglas Seastrand,
Dr. Jack Lund Schafeldt,
Steve Sisolak and
Bret Whipple.

Non-Profit
U.S. Postage
PAID
Las Vegas, NV
Permit No. 1618

This professional development project is a leadership activity funded by a grant from the Nevada State Department of Education, Workforce Investment Act, Title II (Adult Education and Family Literacy). There is no discrimination or denial of participation on the basis of gender, race, national origin, color, disability, age, or sexual orientation.

Staff development

In 2004-2005, we will be bringing two workshops on reading to Nevada:

Teaching Beginning Readers. Objectives: reflect upon the knowledge, skills, and strategies that skilled readers use to read with understanding; identify developmental benchmarks for beginning readers and implications for the teacher/tutor; explore hands-on, research-based instructional approaches that support beginning readers in developing useable knowledge in alphabets, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension.
Research To Practice – Reading Strategies That Work. Objectives: define scientifically based reading research and explore the five reading components that have been identified by the National Reading Panel; explain why teaching these reading components is important to everyone in our ABE programs; provide several practical strategies that teachers can easily use to incorporate the five reading components into their teaching practices.

For information, contact Rachael Dilling, training coordinator for ABE in Nevada, rdilling@cox.net, 702/363-2728.

Awesome!

Praised by the *Focus Bulletin* as “clever, engaging, and educational,” www.awesomestories.com is comprised of the stories behind famous events, legends, people, heroes, and movies. Links to relevant source material lead the readers on a virtual journey where they can “see” where events occurred, “meet” the people involved, and form conclusions about history’s best stories. While no specific reading level is applied to all the stories, pre-GED or advanced ESL students would likely be able to read them.

Relevant

The purpose of www.cdlponline.org is to help adults build reading and life skills. The audio-enhanced stories are accompanied by a variety of learning activities, such as flash cards, matching games, spelling activities, photos, videos, etc.